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New York

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Jurica	(Croatia)
<i>Members:</i>	Belgium	Mr. Grauls
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Tiendrébéogo
	China	Mr. La Yifan
	Costa Rica	Mr. Urbina
	France	Mr. Ripert
	Indonesia	Mr. Natalegawa
	Italy	Mr. Mantovani
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Ettalhi
	Panama	Mr. Suescum
	Russian Federation	Mr. Dolgov
	South Africa	Mr. Kumalo
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United States of America	Ms. DiCarlo
	Viet Nam	Mr. Hoang Chi Trung

Agenda

The situation in Chad and the Sudan

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08-63132 (E)



The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Chad and the Sudan

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Chad, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Allam-mi (Chad) took a seat at the Council table.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. John Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Holmes to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting the Council will hear a briefing by Mr. John Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Holmes: Thank you very much, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief the Council on my recent visits to Chad and to the Sudan.

I visited Chad for a second time to look at the humanitarian situation and response, particularly in the light of the deployment of the European Union military operation (EUFOR) and the United Nations Mission in

the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT) and the transition to MINURCAT II. In eastern Chad, I visited refugee and internally displaced persons (IDPs) camps, and a village where IDPs have begun to return.

In N'djamena I spoke with the Prime Minister and other ministers. National tensions have eased since the attack on N'djamena last February but the situation remains fragile and volatile. In the east, banditry has worsened and poses a significant threat to IDPs, refugees, aid workers and the local population. The underlying tensions from long years of internal conflict and the spillover from Darfur have not gone away. The humanitarian situation is relatively stable in terms of numbers. Around 263,000 refugees from Darfur and 57,000 from Central African Republic, and 180,000 IDPs, are currently receiving humanitarian assistance. Emergency needs are mostly being met and the quality of aid reaching IDPs is much better than on my last visit, in March 2007. However, the long-term presence of such large numbers of refugees and IDPs is resulting in growing tensions with the host population and additional strain on the already fragile environment.

The politicization and militarization of the refugee camps and some IDP sites are major and increasing concerns. In particular, recruitment by armed groups, including of children, notably by the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), is threatening the civilian and humanitarian nature of the camps. This needs to stop if the humanitarian effort is to be able to continue successfully. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has already been unable to deliver assistance in one camp for two months for related reasons. I asked the Government of Chad to do all it can to prevent such problems, and I call on the JEM leadership in particular to recognize their responsibilities too.

In the absence of a settlement in Darfur, there is unfortunately little immediate prospect of return for the Sudanese refugees who have been in Chad for the last five years. The focus is therefore on increasing self-sustainability. There are, however, some signs of hope for the IDPs. There have been limited voluntary returns to their villages of origin in recent months, particularly in locations further away from the Darfur border. Others are moving between the camps and their previous smallholdings to restart agricultural activity. In Louboutique, which I visited, the return process has been greatly facilitated by effective locally led

reconciliation efforts. I hope these can be replicated elsewhere, without putting undue pressure on the IDPs.

Security remains critical, and must go hand in hand with the provision of basic social infrastructure and a stronger presence of State authorities. The presence of EUFOR and the progressive deployment of MINURCAT have helped to stabilize the situation overall, to provide much needed general reassurance to refugees, IDPs and the local community and to improve security for humanitarians.

However, EUFOR has not had the capacity to tackle the growing problems of local banditry and criminality, which remain the greatest single concern for the humanitarian community in eastern Chad. Since the beginning of the year, about 160 serious incidents have been recorded, including the murder of the head of the Save the Children team. This banditry, which is carried out largely for profit, following a pattern we have seen in Darfur, is encouraged by the proliferation of small arms throughout the area, the presence of armed militias and more or less total impunity for those responsible, in the absence of any meaningful local judicial system. Some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have already withdrawn, wholly or partially, and we will need to work hard to fill these gaps and provide the best basis possible for others to stay.

A speedy and effective deployment of MINURCAT II and a smooth transition from EUFOR are therefore vital to help improve security for refugees, IDPs, the humanitarian community and the original population alike. The deployment of the newly trained Chadian gendarme force, the *Détachement intégré de sécurité* (DIS), fully supported by MINURCAT, is equally vital. They have the mandate and training to provide the kind of local police protection in and around the camps that is so badly needed. Deployment has already begun and I was encouraged by the attitude of members of the DIS that I met. But there is a long way to go, and there remain some key issues of equipment and operational capability to be resolved.

The Council will soon be voting on the future of the United Nations presence in Chad. I urge members to ensure that MINURCAT II has the resources to cover the key geographical areas currently covered by EUFOR, in addition to one or two others, with the necessary logistical support and an appropriate mandate.

In my discussions with the Chadian Government and local authorities, I also strongly encouraged them to increase their effective presence in the East and to live up to their own responsibilities for ensuring security, providing basic services and supporting development. They, in turn, drew attention to the need to take into account the unequal treatment of the original population, many of whom are themselves on the edge of extreme poverty and food insecurity. We need to add to our existing assistance projects a package to address this as well as the environmental issues. I hope donors will look favourably on this, as on the overall Consolidated Appeals Process 2009 requirements of some \$389 million, in the same way that they have responded generously to humanitarian needs in 2008.

Overall, I left Chad with slightly more optimism about future prospects than I had expected, including in terms of our efforts to provide life-saving humanitarian aid. However, the risks of rapid deterioration remain high. The international community and the Security Council cannot afford to neglect Chad.

I should now like to turn to the Sudan, where I visited all three Darfur states, South Kordofan, Juba and Khartoum. The billion-dollar humanitarian operation in Darfur, still the largest in the world, will soon enter its sixth year. The needs are not diminishing, and the situation remains grave. This year more than 315,000 people have been forced to flee from violence and inter-tribal conflict. Even if this displacement or re-displacement is only temporary, the destruction, including of humanitarian infrastructure, and consequent delays in relief assistance redouble the suffering.

To the frustration of all, many of the problems noted in the past are equally relevant today. The operation nevertheless continues to achieve its primary goal of keeping people alive, not least through the sheer determination of thousands of aid workers to overcome the obstacles. But at the risk of stating the obvious, the things most urgently needed are a ceasefire that is declared and respected by all parties and a negotiated settlement to the conflict.

The critical humanitarian challenges today are access and protection of civilians. There are many reasons for our access problems, including the continuing violence, travel restrictions, the politicization of the humanitarian environment,

including in the IDP camps, and the dramatic increase in attacks on humanitarians and their property. The year 2008 has seen these attacks reach unprecedented levels. As of 30 November, 261 vehicles had been hijacked and 172 compounds broken into. The cars and other valuables stolen seem to find their way mostly to Chad or Libya for resale. Rebel movements, or groups or individuals linked to them, appear to be primarily responsible for the majority of these terrifying incidents in rural areas. However, many also occur in main towns under Government control. I call on both the Government security forces and rebel leaders to put a stop to this banditry once and for all. It seriously damages the quality of assistance — for example, World Food Programme rations are still only at 70 per cent because of attacks on their convoys — and it damages the credibility of their promises to ensure our safety.

Nobody can be satisfied with only keeping needy people alive. Alleviating their suffering and protecting them from abuses are as much a part of humanitarianism today as are food, water and other material assistance. For example, throughout my trip in Darfur, I was confronted with the pervasive risk of sexual violence. I met many women who had the courage to speak out. It was therefore particularly disturbing that programmes aimed at preventing or responding to this violence are under increased pressure from Government authorities, with South Darfur presenting the most difficult challenges and one or two unacceptable incidents.

The authorities there have also recently forced the closure of two NGO mental health projects. An air of unnecessary suspicion continues to hang over the aims of this type of project. I raised these issues with the Government at all levels. I hope that we can reach a better shared understanding of the essential purpose of protection and find ways of working together to help people living amid these brutal risks.

On the long-standing issue of administrative obstacles impeding humanitarian operations, the Government recently extended the moratorium on restrictions through January 2010. I welcome this early decision. We should be able to harmonize procedures and practices between the federal and state levels, and address issues together before hasty unilateral actions are taken, such as harassing or closing projects or expelling staff. I have also asked the Government to provide international humanitarian staff of

non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with multiple-entry visas to increase operational efficiency and to avoid the anxiety of having to wait for exit visas, for example in urgent compassionate circumstances. This would reduce bureaucracy for both sides and would significantly improve the atmosphere of relations.

We must also be aware of the effects of continued violence, stress and upheaval in Darfur. Those in camps are increasingly frustrated. The longer they stay there, the more militancy is increased by questions such as land and property rights. Fears are increased by renewed pressure by Government authorities for rapid return, even when security conditions are clearly not right for safety or sustainability. Some camps are particularly sensitive, such as Kalma or those around Zalingei in West Darfur, both of which I visited. Just yesterday, tensions came to a boil in Hissa Hissa camp in Zalingei, resulting in a tense standoff which required the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) to position itself between the camp and an armed group. To help address these issues, I have asked the Government again to allow UNHCR to support them with camp coordination and management. I also strongly urge rebel leaders to respect the civilian and humanitarian nature of the camps.

Frustration and problems are not, of course, confined to the camps, but exist in many rural areas too. We are trying to engage with and help all communities, including Arab nomadic communities, and to promote early recovery and development wherever possible. Local reconciliation efforts between communities, as well as wider political negotiations, are essential for future normalization, and I was encouraged that these were already under way in some places, for example to allow the recent harvest to go ahead in relative peace in some areas.

Overall, my discussions with the Sudanese authorities, while frank at times, took place in a constructive spirit. We now need to see rapid results on the ground. We are also intensifying our contacts with the rebel movements to persuade them that they too must respect humanitarian personnel and aid efforts.

From Darfur I went to South Kordofan to assess the humanitarian response to May's serious violence in Abyei, which forced some 50,000 civilians to flee, many to nearby Agok. Talking to the displaced Dinka, the message was clear: without continued progress on

the Abyei Road Map, including further support to the joint implementation and police units, most of the population will not return, primarily due to fears of renewed violence. I also discussed this with the new Abyei Administrator and his Deputy, in particular the importance of ensuring that the resources required to implement the Road Map are made available. This is a point I strongly took up in my meetings in Juba and in Khartoum. The importance of Abyei to North-South peace can hardly be overstated.

I also visited Juba for the first time since March 2007. Juba itself has boomed in the meantime, with the good and bad sides that boom implies. But outside the capital, the process of construction remains painfully slow, and little of the oil revenue flowing to Southern Sudan has so far been seen.

Southern Sudan, while no longer a humanitarian emergency as such, still has some of the worst child and maternal health indicators in the world. For example, maternal mortality is twice as high as Darfur. One child in every seven dies under the age of five. Agriculture has huge potential but, three years on from the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, more than 90 per cent of fruits, vegetables and consumer goods are imported from Uganda or Kenya.

The good news is that some 12,000 kilometres of roads have been de-mined, 3,000 water points have been rehabilitated, 2.4 million former IDPs and refugees have returned and primary school enrolment rates have risen dramatically. So, some of the peace dividends hoped for on the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement have begun to appear. But there is a long way to go. While Darfur's problems tend to take the spotlight, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement remains of huge importance for the whole country. The United Nations, NGOs and donors must all continue to help ensure effective recovery and development. But the Government of Southern Sudan also needs to allocate additional resources for basic services.

Let me conclude with a few general points. The situation in Darfur remains a huge challenge — above all for the people of Darfur, but also for humanitarians, for UNAMID and for the political process. There is plenty of room to criticize the Government of the Sudan for continuing human rights violations, for not disarming the militias, for not always facilitating humanitarian relief, or for declaring a ceasefire then

almost immediately violating it. However, the rebel movements have neither declared a ceasefire nor shown great readiness to engage in a political process, and are also not helping relief efforts. They have a lot to answer for, too.

Meanwhile, the situation in Darfur cannot continue without causing incalculable damage, not only to the physical environment — the risks to which in areas like forest cover and water resources struck me particularly forcibly on this visit — but also to the ability of Darfur to recover its culture and way of life in the future. A generation is growing up in the camps with no knowledge of what went before. How will they respond if and when real peace returns? How many will go back to villages in some cases already occupied by others? Humanitarian relief cannot answer these questions. Only decisive political action can.

Meanwhile, it is important that UNAMID continue to use its current and future capacity to improve the physical protection of civilians, in particular in the camps near the main towns, as they have now done so successfully around Kalma camp in South Darfur. This will not only improve the safety of civilians and humanitarians, but will also help contribute to reducing tensions overall.

Lastly, let me make one comment on the issue relating to the International Criminal Court in the Sudan. Regardless of what may happen in the coming months, it is in everyone's interest to ensure the safety of humanitarians and to sustain the humanitarian operation. I took every opportunity to remind the Government of the Sudan of its fundamental responsibilities in this context. For our part, we will do everything in our power to maintain our operations to help those in need.

The President: I thank Under-Secretary-General Holmes for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of Chad.

Mr. Allam-mi (Chad) (spoke in French): I thank Under-Secretary-General Holmes for his complete briefing on the security and humanitarian situation in eastern Chad. I wish, however, to stress, on behalf of the Chadian Government, that overall there has been an improvement in the situation compared with a year ago. We owe that to the mobilization of our own resources and to support from the international community, especially the Security Council, which

took the decision to deploy the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT) / European Union operation in eastern Chad and Central African Republic (EUFOR Chad/CAR).

To be sure, there have been shortcomings, which have sometimes been criticized by non-governmental organizations, which are rightly demanding in that regard. We hope that the new MINURCAT, expanded through a military component, will be effective in meeting the expectations of those who will be its beneficiaries: refugees, displaced persons and, of course, the local populations, which have felt the pressure of this situation, as Mr. Holmes has just indicated, as well as humanitarians. Let us hope that the new operation will help us to demilitarize the camps in order to address what has been said regarding the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and other Sudanese actors who would take advantage of the situation in order to carry out recruitment in the camps.

My Government reiterates its complete readiness to fully cooperate with the United Nations mission in the eastern part of our country. I also wish to express my satisfaction with the positive results we have just received in our consultations with the Secretariat, regarding the deployment of the new United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad II (MINURCAT II).

With regard to the neutralization of the camps just mentioned — a situation that has resulted from the lack of effective neutralization of those camps — the fact that the Sudanese are recruiting there is not the sole responsibility of Chad. Those who claim that we support the Sudanese rebels are unable to provide us with any tangible proof. Chad does not manufacture weapons. Chad does not have weapons to provide to any rebellion. Chad is a poor country that cannot allow itself the luxury of supporting rebels from another country, and even less able to those from a friendly, neighbourly country such as the Sudan.

On the contrary, Chad could contribute positively in the Sudan in the context of a dialogue among Sudanese. Chad is prepared to actively support all efforts to bring peace to Darfur. We welcome the normalization of relations with the Sudan in the context of the Dakar agreement, and we will work towards the consolidation of friendly relations and good-neighbourliness with our Sudanese brothers. For

us, as long as the tragic situation in Darfur is not settled, our fear is that relations between the two countries could run the risk of being negatively affected.

We have no internal problems. The hundreds of political parties in Chad have signed a platform of understanding, known as the political agreement of 13 August 2007. All who signed that agreement are within the country and we are making our way towards free and transparent elections under the supervision of the international community.

Those who have taken up arms should give them up and should return to the country in accordance with the Sirte Agreement, which for us still remains valid.

The President: I thank the representative of Chad for his statement.

I shall now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make comments or ask questions in response to the briefing we have just heard.

Mr. Ettalhi (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): First of all, we would like to welcome among us Mr. Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, and we thank him for his briefing to the Council regarding the overall humanitarian situation in Chad and in the Sudan. We also wish to commend him for his praiseworthy efforts in carrying out his noble mission and for the efforts made in the region, in particular his most recent on-site visit to assess the situation of the refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), as well as the talks with the parties and the humanitarian organizations concerned, in order to alleviate humanitarian suffering. We also welcome our brother Mr. Ahmad Allam-mi, the Permanent Representative of Chad and thank him for his briefing.

My Government shares the concerns of the Under-Secretary-General with regard to the continued deterioration of the humanitarian situation, due primarily to the continued acts of violence, which unfortunately lead to further human suffering of civilians.

It is regrettable to note, as Mr. Holmes has stated, that some refugees and IDPs have suffered under practices which should not take place, such as recruitment and sexual violence. We strongly support his invitation and his appeal to put an end to recruitment in the camps, on the part of the rebels, and

to end the politicization of the camps. Certainly, that activity runs counter to any betterment of the situation of the refugees.

We insist on the importance of continuing to provide humanitarian assistance and to facilitate access to the IDPs and refugees, to guarantee protection for them and thus to encourage them to return to their villages. It is certain that that will require close cooperation between the national authorities of the two countries as well as the international community in order to guarantee access of humanitarian assistance to all those who need it. In that regard, we wish to convey our gratitude to all donor parties and to underscore the importance of Mr. Holmes' comments on the importance of insisting on the protection of civilians.

There is only one possible solution — a political solution. We believe that a political solution to the conflicts is more pressing today than ever before, as a condition to put an end to the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the region. Throughout past years — and I believe everyone realizes that — military and armed confrontation has only resulted in greater suffering for civilians and more serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

The time has come for all the parties to work towards a ceasefire and to respond swiftly to peace initiatives. They must also respect the agreements that have been ratified among various parties and implement them. In that connection, we wish to refer to the factions that are still hesitating to participate in the political process. Here we tell them that it is their duty — in all aspects, including religious, political, humanitarian or other — to join in that political process.

In any case, we wish to express our satisfaction at the restoration of normal diplomatic relations between two brotherly countries, Chad and the Sudan. We hope that that normalization represents an important step towards achieving peace in the region. We also express our satisfaction at Mr. Holmes's statement that he had returned from Chad with a certain amount of optimism. We thank him for all his remarks and recommendations.

Mr. Ripert (France) (*spoke in French*): I should like at the outset to thank Mr. John Holmes for his presentation and our colleague the Permanent Representative of Chad for his statement. Those two

statements remind us of a harsh reality. The situation of the civilian population in Darfur and in the border region of Chad remains tragic, and it is on that subject that I should like to focus my remarks.

First, I should like to address several problems that arise both in the context of the Sudan and in that of Chad. France's primary concern relates to the impact of banditry and the acts of armed groups on the security of humanitarian personnel. John Holmes quite rightly stressed that point. We firmly condemn those attacks, and those responsible for them must be held accountable. In that regard, we should recall the primary responsibility of host countries for the protection and security of humanitarian personnel.

My second observation concerns the need to respect the civilian and humanitarian nature of the camps; the problem arises in Chad as well as in Darfur. It is unacceptable that armed groups recruit within the camps. I would add that that in no way justifies attacks by Sudanese Government forces against the camps, as we saw in Darfur at Kalma three months ago. That situation illustrates the need on both sides of the border for operations that can effectively protect the population and create a safe environment so as to permit the delivery of humanitarian aid and access by the population to that aid. We will shortly have the opportunity to revisit the subject of Chad when we discuss the second United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT II).

My third observation concerns the recruitment of child soldiers, which unfortunately continues to occur on both sides of the border. France appeals to all parties concerned to fully honour their obligations in that regard and, in particular, to cooperate with the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

I should now like to make a second set of comments, which apply more particularly to the case of Sudan. We are very much committed to compliance by all parties with their obligations under international humanitarian law. I just referred to certain obligations of armed groups. Moreover, we are particularly disturbed to note that recently the Sudanese Armed Forces and their auxiliary militias have continued, despite the new announcement of a unilateral ceasefire by President Al-Bashir, to carry out indiscriminate attacks against civilian populations, including aerial bombardments.

In that regard, this very morning, the Security Council heard a very clear report from the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, who referred to continued grave and repeated violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, in particular against the most vulnerable populations, women and children. Furthermore, I should like to recall that the Council has demanded that the Sudanese Armed Forces cease to use white aircraft, which are easily confused with humanitarian and United Nations aircraft. We note that the Sudanese Government undertook clear commitments in that regard during the meeting of the Tripartite Commission in October. We attach the utmost importance to its full adherence to those commitments.

I should also like to emphasize the need for the cooperation of the Sudanese Government with humanitarian workers. Darfur is the site of the largest humanitarian operation in the world. It is unacceptable that the Sudanese Government, which has failed to carry out its responsibility to protect its own civilians, should further aggravate the situation by impeding the activities of humanitarian workers. We note that the Sudanese authorities renewed the moratorium on humanitarian access earlier than they did last year.

But in addition to that, they must put an end to the bureaucratic red tape that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) face daily from junior administrative officials. This red tape is endless; NGOs tell us about it every day. In particular, we deplore the restrictions placed by the Government on the activities of NGOs that have protection programmes, given the scope of the needs in Darfur, where the victims of violence — particularly sexual violence — are innumerable and continuously increasing. In all those areas, the Sudanese authorities, like all the parties, will be judged by their actions, not by their intentions.

Finally, I wish to refer briefly to Chad. First, I refer to the assessment made by Mr. John Holmes, according to whom, despite the difficulties that persist, the situation has improved. France and the European Union — which, together with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Government of Chad, were involved in the establishment of the MINURCAT operation — share in that measured optimism. We highly commend the mobilization of Chadian authorities and civil society and the efforts of international organizations, the

United Nations and NGOs, supported by a very strong European commitment.

Moreover, my delegation fully agrees with Mr. Holmes's comment that the return of displaced persons needs to be on a voluntary basis. Mr. Bernard Kouchner, Minister for Foreign Affairs of France, recently went to eastern Chad to evaluate the situation. He had occasion to see for himself that voluntary returns, while certainly still limited, were taking place locally. The discussion about the voluntary nature of returns cannot, however, be used as an excuse to conceal the sometimes too slow response by certain United Nations agencies in assisting returns through appropriate emergency relief activities.

Finally, when the Council prepares to soon discuss the resumption by the United Nations of the European Union military operation — EUFOR — I should like to offer France's support for Mr. Holmes's observations about the importance of the international presence and of the integrated Chadian security force in the protection of civilian populations. We must not waver in our efforts in that regard. Just a moment ago, the Permanent Representative of Chad reiterated his hope for the continued mobilization of the Security Council. We must shoulder our responsibilities by responding favourably to that request.

Ms. DiCarlo (United States of America): I too would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Holmes for his briefing today. I would also like to express the deep gratitude of the United States for the work of the United Nations humanitarian workers and representatives of non-governmental organizations that are helping vulnerable populations in the Sudan and Chad.

I shall make a few comments on the Sudan. Both the Under-Secretary-General and the Secretary-General, in his 17 October report (S/2008/659), paint a grim picture of the situation there. Despite the 2007 joint communiqué and multiple promises of ceasefire, military operations and banditry against civilians and aid workers in the Sudan are on the rise. Since January, 230,000 civilians have been forced to flee violence, and violence against aid workers in the first eight months of 2008 surpassed the totals in 2007. Hijackings, kidnappings and break-ins have forced some non-governmental organizations to suspend work in the region. The United States joins others in urging the Government of the Sudan to prevent such attacks,

to honour its promises of ceasefire, to adhere to monitoring mechanisms and to fulfil its responsibility to protect civilian populations and humanitarian relief workers.

The United States places a high value on humanitarian assistance and humanitarian programmes designed to improve the protection of civilians and prevent gender-based violence in Darfur.

Since 2004, the United States has contributed more than \$3 billion for humanitarian programmes in the Sudan and eastern Chad. We are deeply disturbed that the Government of the Sudan continues to harass international non-governmental organizations operating in Darfur and impedes their work. The Government of the Sudan must fully support humanitarian programmes designed to address the safety of populations made vulnerable by the ongoing conflict.

The United States also expresses grave concern regarding the situation of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Chad. We urge the Government of Chad to maintain the integrity of the refugee and IDP camps in eastern Chad, prevent the recruitment of refugees by armed groups and expedite the deployment of Chadian gendarmes to refugee and IDP camps in eastern Chad.

We continue to support a follow-on mission to succeed the current United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT) and the European Union-led military force in Chad and the Central African Republic (EUFOR), whose mandates are set to expire in March 2009. We believe their activities are critical to the security of vulnerable populations and humanitarian workers and applaud the sacrifices made by MINURCAT and EUFOR personnel.

We note that the Governments of Chad and the Sudan are making efforts to normalize relations. We support the Chad-Sudan contact group and the Government of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya facilitating these efforts. However, much more progress is needed. We continue to urge Chad and the Sudan to immediately cease support for opposing rebel groups in the region and implement the Dakar agreements and previous accords.

We call on all parties to respect the rights of civilian populations in eastern Chad and in the Sudan.

Mr. Grauls (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I would also like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. John Holmes, for his very informative, detailed and nuanced briefing on his recent travels to Chad and the Sudan. I would also like to thank him and his team for having undertaken this mission. My thanks, of course, are also extended to the Permanent Representative of Chad for being here and for what he said.

I would like briefly to make a few comments after having listened to the statement made by Mr. Holmes. First of all, on Chad, the humanitarian and security situation in the country remains very precarious, in spite of some improvements that were encouraging and were pointed out by Mr. Holmes. That is why Belgium earnestly supports the assumption of the activities of the European-led military force in Chad and the Central African Republic (EUFOR) by a United Nations peacekeeping mission and awaits the proposals of the Secretary-General in his report to be issued soon.

Belgium is in favour of a rapid and effective insertion of MINURCAT II in Chad and also in the Central African Republic and for the speeded up normalization of relations between Chad and the Sudan. These developments could certainly have a positive impact on the situation the east of the country.

Regarding his trip to the Sudan, I would like to make the following comment. My delegation notes that the substance of the message made by Mr. Holmes has, unfortunately, not really changed. In spite of statements and promises, the humanitarian situation is not improving. Violence against the civilian population continues to grow every day, and we have just heard that since the beginning of 2008 more than 300,000 additional persons have been displaced following indiscriminate attacks by the Sudanese forces supported by allied militias and rebel movements. The Permanent Representative of France has just referred to this as well.

This situation is in striking contrast to the efforts stated to relaunch the peace process and to speed up the deployment of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). Belgium deplores the fact that the unilateral ceasefire proclaimed by the President of the Sudan has not had any effect in the field, either from the Government side or the rebel movements, which on both sides continue

their military strategies in direct contradiction to their oral commitments.

We call once again on all the parties, not only to work sincerely towards a rapid ceasefire and end of hostilities but, above all, to give absolute priority to the protection of the civilian population. In this context, we welcome the extension by the Government of the Sudan of the moratorium on the facilitation of humanitarian assistance to Darfur until the end of 2010. At the same time, however, we call upon the Government to implement this document, concretely and systematically, so that humanitarian organizations can really carry out their work effectively.

Belgium would like to reiterate its request to the Sudanese authorities to cooperate fully with the United Nations and to implement all of their commitments to expedite the deployment of UNAMID so that its mandate to protect civilians can be fully implemented.

Finally, as regards the situation in southern Sudan, we agree with Mr. Holmes to the effect that the resolution of security questions, among others, around the town of Abeyei, is a basic condition in order to make progress in a significant manner in the humanitarian sphere. Furthermore, the population is still waiting impatiently for the peace dividends, for example, in terms of infrastructure and social services.

Finally, I would like to express my delegation's greatest appreciation for the humanitarian work done by the United Nations and non-governmental organization staff in Chad and the Sudan under extremely difficult circumstances.

Mr. Dolgov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Like our colleagues, we would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Holmes for his comprehensive briefing on the humanitarian situation in Chad and the Sudan subsequent to his recent trip. We listened with interest to the statements made by the Permanent Representative of Chad, too. We support the activities of Mr. Holmes and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in carrying out the tasks that have been entrusted to them.

We agree with concerns expressed as to the serious worsening of the humanitarian situation in that region. Recent events, unfortunately, have caused an additional rise in the number of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in those countries, and it is

obvious that the stricken population is in need of humanitarian cooperation on the part of the international community. We are convinced that effective, coordinated participation by the United Nations, especially that of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and other humanitarian agencies, as well as from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and non-governmental organizations, will help significantly to alleviate the suffering of civilians.

We believe that ensuring safe and unhindered access to humanitarian staff and humanitarian supplies to the stricken areas is a key factor for effective humanitarian assistance. We are for eliminating unjustified administrative barriers that make it more difficult to get supplies to the population. In this connection, we note the efforts that have been undertaken in this area by the Governments of the Sudan and Chad. These should be continued and developed.

We categorically condemn the attacks of armed groups and bands on humanitarian workers. They must be stopped immediately. It is fundamentally important to ensure the demilitarized status of refugee and IDP camps. Access of foreign humanitarian staff is only one of the aspects for carrying out tasks of this effective assistance. It should not be a goal in and of itself. The overall coordination of actions, including determining priorities, rules, resources and itineraries for transporting assistance, and also the choice of partners, is the prerogative of the receiving country's Government. We are certain that the international community and all humanitarian partners — the United Nations and non-governmental organizations — must respect the sovereignty of the host country.

In this context, we would like once again to emphasize the imperative need of the commitment of the international humanitarian community to the basic principles of lending humanitarian emergency assistance with neutrality, humanitarianism, objectivity and independence.

We are convinced that an effective improvement of the humanitarian situation, including in the Sudan and Chad, will be possible only through the adoption of a comprehensive approach. This must entail the creation of the necessary security conditions in the eastern part of Chad, an internal political settlement in that country, a solution to the problems of the cross-

border movements of armed groups and the normalization of the situation in the subregion as a whole.

In this connection, it is of course important to maintain positive momentum in the process of establishing normal inter-State relations between Chad and the Sudan. We support in this context the efforts of the African Union, the contact group of African countries and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya in monitoring the implementation of the Dakar agreements and previous agreements, and we trust that these efforts will be pursued.

It is important to ensure interaction between the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad, the European Union-led peacekeeping force and the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur. All opposition groups in Darfur, especially armed groups, must join the peace agreement immediately and constructively participate in the political process.

I absolutely agree with those colleagues who emphasized before me the key importance of progress in the political arena in Chad, in the Sudan and with regard to relations between them. Such progress would not only promote the stabilization of the security situation, but also help in dealing with the humanitarian situation, in maintaining uninterrupted humanitarian supplies, in protecting the civilian population and in promoting the safe and voluntary return of internally displaced persons to their homes. That would promote solutions to a whole series of humanitarian problems in the region through the active coordinating role of the United Nations.

Mr. Suescum (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): More than five years after the start of the conflict in Darfur, we are in a critical situation, with significant progress being made in the political process and the deployment of the hybrid operation. Actions taken by the Sudan, the countries of the subregion and the international community will, to a large extent, define the future of that region.

In this context, we consider the recent visit to the Sudan and Chad by Under-Secretary-General John Holmes to have been timely, and we thank him for his detailed briefing on his visits. We are also grateful to the Permanent Representative of Chad for his comments and welcome his presence here in this Chamber.

There is no doubt that we must achieve a permanent ceasefire and political settlement to the conflict in Darfur. Nevertheless, protecting the population is a matter of immediate importance. For this reason, Panama welcomes the cooperation of the Government of the Sudan in speeding up bureaucratic procedures relative to humanitarian actors, and we are confident that these will be duly implemented.

Despite efforts to improve the humanitarian situation, the recurrence of crimes committed against humanitarian personnel and operations in Darfur and eastern Chad is reason for concern. We strongly condemn these attacks and underscore the need to bring those responsible for these crimes to justice.

We reiterate that protecting civilians and humanitarian workers is primarily the responsibility of the Governments of the Sudan and Chad, but this does not exempt armed groups from their obligations under international humanitarian law. We urge the parties to the conflict to grant unrestricted access to humanitarian actors, so that they can provide humanitarian assistance to the communities that need it.

The scale of the conflict in Darfur must not distract us from the civilian population in southern Sudan. We applaud Mr. Holmes' visit to Abiye and Juba aimed at encouraging the donor community and the Government of southern Sudan to deal with the most pressing humanitarian needs of the population there. We encourage Mr. Holmes and Members of this Organization to continue to devote their best efforts to hasten the return of displaced persons and to promote development in the region.

Furthermore, and with a view to minimizing the impact of the Darfur crisis on the security and humanitarian situation in eastern Chad, close cooperation between the Government of Chad and the international community is essential. We wish to highlight the tireless efforts in this regard carried out by the European Union-led peacekeeping force (EUFOR) in Chad and the Central African Republic and the elements of the *Détachement intégré de sécurité*, which is already deployed. The security vacuum that could occur upon the completion of the EUFOR mandate could place civilians at risk. We believe that, given the fragile security situation, it is essential that a robust United Nations military force replace EUFOR at the end of its mandate in March 2009.

Mr. Natalegawa (Indonesia): Allow me first of all to join previous speakers in welcoming once again Mr. John Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, to the Security Council, and in thanking him for his comprehensive briefing. We also appreciate very much the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Chad.

We share the view that the humanitarian situation in the regions that the Under-Secretary-General visited remains difficult in both the context of unresolved conflicts and in the immense size of the humanitarian needs. We value the work being done by the humanitarian community in Chad, in the Darfur region of the Sudan and in southern Sudan. This work needs to take place in an uninterrupted manner while the search for a political settlement continues or, in the case of southern Sudan, the peace is maintained.

The protection of civilians is a priority for the international community. It was the threat posed to civilians by the outbreak of conflicts that brought about the international community's involvement in these regions. Towards that end, the rapid deployment of peacekeeping missions in Chad and Darfur becomes a matter of utmost urgency. Equally important is support for the efforts of regional countries and the African Union.

In Darfur, we look forward to the resumption of the political process under the leadership of Joint Chief Mediator Djibril Bassolé. We welcome the Sudan's declaration of a ceasefire. Pending the establishment of a more structured ceasefire mechanism, we believe that all parties in Darfur should unilaterally cease hostilities. The international community should continue to encourage this outcome. A rapid political settlement of the conflict in Darfur offers the potential to improve the humanitarian situation in the region. There is also the hope that an improvement in Chad-Sudan relations would contribute to the forging of peace on both sides of the border.

We deplore all attacks against humanitarian workers. We are appalled that the number of those attacks in Darfur this year has doubled from last year. Incidences of carjackings are also worrisome; not only are humanitarian organizations losing their assets, but worse, these vehicles usually end up being used for military purposes. We underscore that most of these attacks are reported to have been perpetrated by the rebel movements. We therefore join the call for them to

stop these acts and remind them that these acts could constitute war crimes.

Close cooperation between the Government of the Sudan and the humanitarian community could contribute greatly to improving the humanitarian situation. Above all, it is the Government of the Sudan that has a responsibility to protect humanitarian workers in its country, and we look to it to take every measure to do so. For humanitarian efforts to be successful, the well-established international principles of humanitarian assistance should always be observed.

Finally, we must not lose sight of the development perspective. In almost every case of conflict, poverty and underdevelopment are typically present — and, indeed, are frequently the root cause of the conflict. The parties to a conflict need to be assured that the dividends of peace will be real and that the international community will assist them in establishing sustainable peace.

Mr. Tiendrébéogo (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): Allow me first of all to thank Under-Secretary-General Holmes for his briefing on the humanitarian situation in the Sudan and Chad. We are especially grateful to him for visiting the region, which of course has enabled him to have first-hand information. We would also like to thank the Permanent Representative of Chad for his important statement.

With regard to Chad, we are especially concerned about the precarious state of the overall security situation in the country, especially the ongoing acts of violence and killings of humanitarian staff, in particular in the East. Acts of banditry, clashes between communities, the militarization of camps and forced recruitment, especially of children, call for action by the Security Council and the international community as a whole. The end of the mandate of the European Union military operation in the Republic of Chad and in the Central African Republic in March 2009 is further reason for that. We hope that the new United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT II) will be in a position to meet the many expectations we all have for it.

The effective deployment at the beginning of November of the integrated security detachment in four areas in eastern Chad and the training of gendarmes and police by MINURCAT are encouraging steps in making camps for refugees and displaced persons safer.

We hope those initiatives will be extended to other sites.

We commend the Government of Chad for its efforts to combat banditry, for that is the only way we can promote the return of refugees and displaced persons in the long-term, as well as the success of development policies. We encourage the Government to continue its efforts in that regard.

Given the many challenges faced by the people of Chad, we encourage donors to make additional efforts, especially by responding to the appeal launched at Geneva on 19 November 2008 by the Under-Secretary-General, which was reiterated this afternoon by Mr. Holmes.

With regard to the Sudan, despite the signing of a ceasefire agreement between the authorities and rebel groups and the staffing increase in the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), there is still a great deal to be done, in particular in the humanitarian area. We urge the Government and the rebel forces to do their utmost to ensure the protection of civilians and the freedom of movement for humanitarian staff. In that regard, we commend the constructive spirit in which Mr. Holmes engaged the Sudanese authorities during his visit.

The ongoing deterioration in the humanitarian and security situation in camps for refugees and internally displaced persons in Darfur, the eastern part of Chad and the north-east of the Central African Republic requires intensified efforts by the entire international community, especially by the Security Council. MINURCAT and UNAMID should further coordinate their efforts to strengthen their presence in the camps and regions bordering Chad and the Sudan.

Lastly, we welcome the normalization of diplomatic relations between Chad and the Sudan. We hope that that will contribute to improving the humanitarian situation and, in general, establish peace and security in the subregion. We also hope that similar significant progress will be achieved, especially before the next meeting of the contact group on the implementation of the Dakar agreements.

I cannot conclude without thanking humanitarian personnel for their daily efforts on behalf of civilians, who risk their lives every day under difficult conditions.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): May I join others in thanking the Under-Secretary-General for his briefing to the Security Council on these important issues. It was also very good to have the opportunity to hear from the representative of Chad. I would also like to begin by echoing what was just said by the representative of Burkina Faso and thank the members of United Nations humanitarian missions around the world who risk their lives to do this important work.

As other speakers have noted today, the humanitarian situation in the region we are discussing remains of grave concern. I should like to turn to the Sudan first.

My Government remains deeply committed to helping the Sudanese people. We are the second largest bilateral donor. We have given over \$700 million in humanitarian aid to the Sudan, over \$250 million of which has been allocated to Darfur. As we have seen, many members of the Council have today shared the Under-Secretary-General's concern with regard to the situation there, in particular as regards problems of security and access to humanitarian aid. Despite all the Council's efforts, those problems continue to worsen. This past year alone, 11 relief workers have been killed and 261 humanitarian vehicles have been hijacked. I think we would all agree that that is unacceptable. It is the duty of all parties to facilitate humanitarian access and to commit to an unconditional ceasefire. It is also worrying, as we heard from the Secretary-General recently, that it appears that the Government has already broken the recently announced ceasefire.

The moratorium on restrictions to humanitarian assistance in Darfur has been renewed until 31 January 2010. That is welcome. The announcement was made by the Government of National Unity on 18 November, but it is still the case that there continue to be bureaucratic impediments to the work of humanitarian agencies operating in Darfur. That is very disappointing. A number of Council colleagues have drawn attention to that issue today. I would like to invite them to join me in calling on the Government of the Sudan to abide by the terms and spirit of the joint communiqué on humanitarian access. There is a need to ensure tangible improvements in humanitarian access, not just in Darfur but also across the entire country.

We also look to the Sudan to make a firm commitment that humanitarian operations and the

safety of humanitarian workers will not impacted by any pending announcement by the International Criminal Court (ICC). That was a theme to which I drew attention in the United Kingdom's statement during the Council's meeting in the Chamber this morning on the ICC and the Sudan.

Turning to South Sudan, it is important that we have the full commitment of the Government of South Sudan to the recovery process. My Government has committed approximately \$500 million to projects in South Sudan since the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed in January 2005. We welcome the launch of the Sudan Recovery Fund for Southern Sudan. We plan to provide another \$70 million to cover it over the next three years.

Turning to Chad, if I may, the humanitarian situation remains precarious for refugees, internally displaced persons and the host population. It demands continued, consistent and sustained humanitarian engagement. As we have heard today, it is also true that the delivery of aid continues to be disrupted by insecurity. Clearly, we need to give priority to ensuring that that comes to an end.

Mr. La Yifan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): We would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Holmes for his briefing on the humanitarian situation in the Sudan and Chad. We would also like to thank the Permanent Representative of Chad for his presence and his remarks.

China has followed closely the security and humanitarian situation in the Sudan and Chad. Armed conflicts result in the deterioration of the humanitarian situation. That is common in many hotspot regions. Experience has shown that it is only by establishing a peaceful environment that humanitarian crises can be resolved comprehensively.

The humanitarian situation in the areas along the border between the Sudan and Chad is closely linked to their bilateral relations. When those relations improve, the tension in the border areas of the two countries can be expected to ease. We welcome the efforts of the Sudan and Chad to improve their bilateral relations. They have completed the process of normalization and the exchange of ambassadors. Both sides also plan to conduct joint patrols along the border, which we hope will help to improve the humanitarian situation there.

We are concerned about the safety of humanitarian relief organizations and personnel. We condemn attacks on them and urge all parties concerned to refrain from attacking international humanitarian relief organizations and personnel and to facilitate their access. We also call on the international community to continue to provide humanitarian assistance to the Sudan and Chad.

The humanitarian crisis is one aspect of the Darfur issue. Its root cause is the armed conflict in that region. The most urgent need in Darfur is to achieve a comprehensive ceasefire and to seek a political solution to the crisis. We support the mediation efforts of the United Nations and the African Union to find a political solution to the Darfur conflict. We hope that the concerted efforts of all sides will create the peaceful environment necessary to alleviate the humanitarian situation in Darfur.

Mr. Hoang Chi Trung (Viet Nam): We wish to thank Mr. John Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, for his comprehensive briefing. We are also very grateful to the Permanent Representative of Chad for his statement.

My delegation shares the concerns expressed about the grave situation in Chad and the Sudan, especially the plight of the affected population in Darfur, where 4.5 million people still live in dire need of humanitarian assistance. The sexual and gender-based violence against women in Chad and the Sudan is also alarming. We are particularly concerned about the banditry, carjacking and armed attacks on relief workers in Darfur.

We categorically condemn all those violent acts against relief workers in Darfur and support investigations to bring the perpetrators to justice. We urge all parties concerned to fully respect international humanitarian law and ensure the safety of United Nations staff and humanitarian workers.

Viet Nam welcomes the improvement in relations between Chad and the Sudan, especially the recent exchange of ambassadors between the two countries. We hope that this will be a major contribution to the consolidation and improvement of the security and humanitarian situation in the subregion.

We take positive note of the Sudanese Government's 17 November extension of the

moratorium on fast-track procedures for humanitarian workers in Darfur until 31 January 2010. We believe that this step will help to enhance the delivery of much-needed humanitarian assistance to the affected population in the region and facilitate humanitarian operations. This momentum of cooperation should be further encouraged.

Viet Nam highly appreciates the efforts made by the humanitarian community, especially the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, in cooperating with the respective Governments of Chad and the Sudan to improve the humanitarian situation in the subregion. In this connection, we commend the visit by Under-Secretary-General Holmes to Chad and the Sudan in November. We welcome the launching on 20 November of the United Nations work plan for the Sudan and call on the international community and donors to respond actively and to extend the resources necessary to expedite the plan's implementation.

Finally, we are of the view that better coordination and cooperation between the United Nations missions in the subregion — the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur and the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad — will have help to improve the humanitarian situation in Chad and in the Sudan. The root causes of the conflict and their concomitant humanitarian disasters must be addressed by reviving the political process, encouraging national reconciliation and promoting socio-economic development in both Chad and the Sudan.

Mr. Urbina (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Like those who have spoken before me, I thank Under-Secretary-General Holmes for his briefing on his visit to Chad and the Sudan, which gave us a clearer picture of humanitarian operations on the ground and an analysis of the factors directly affecting the protection of the civilian population and the work of humanitarian agencies.

I also wish to thank the Permanent Representative of Chad for his presence and his statement.

With regard to the situation in Chad, we share Mr. Holmes' concern over the lack of security caused by the criminal activities of bandits against the civilian population and humanitarian workers. We are all the more concerned because the bandits operate with almost complete impunity. We commend the work of

the European Union Force in Chad to improve security and hope that the transition to the second United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT II) and the deployment of more United Nations personnel will lead to an even deeper improvement with regard to the protection of the civilian population. Costa Rica will work with other delegations in determining the mandate of MINURCAT II so as to further improve security around the camps for refugees and displaced persons.

My delegation also shares the Under-Secretary-General's assessment of the vicious circle of impunity in the harassment of and violence against humanitarian workers and civilians. We were pleased to note that Mr. Holmes raised that matter with the authorities of Chad, and take this opportunity to call on that Government to take firm steps to strengthen its investigation and justice mechanisms. We also recall that MINURCAT is presently mandated to assist the Government of Chad in promoting the rule of law, and we invite that Government to take advantage of the support of the international community to fight effectively against impunity. My delegation firmly condemns the recruitment of children by armed groups.

With regard to the Sudan, we share the Under-Secretary-General's concern over the deterioration of the security situation in rural and urban areas, and particularly in displaced persons camps. We agree that a real and verifiable ceasefire between the Government of the Sudan and the rebel groups is essential if humanitarian assistance is to be more effective.

The initiative of the Government of the Sudan to declare a unilateral ceasefire on 12 November was, in our view, a positive step, but that it has yet to translate into any real improvement in the situation on the ground for people receiving humanitarian assistance and the personnel delivering it.

We also share Mr. Holmes' concern over the increase in attacks on and harassment of humanitarian workers. We recall that the work of those individuals has a direct impact on more than 4.5 million people in the Sudan. It is incumbent on the Government of the Sudan to protect those who deliver assistance. We also agree on the importance of all parties to the conflict recognizing and observing the humanitarian principles and norms of international humanitarian law. Improvement in the Sudan, especially in Darfur, depends on the actions of the parties and these must

have, at the point of departure, a clear commitment to those principles and rules.

I wish to refer to the situation of persons living in displaced persons camps. I would like to ask Mr. Holmes what his assessment is of the situation of those persons and the plans in effect for their future.

My delegation takes note of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Chad and the Sudan and we recognize the efforts of the contact group and the Government of Libya in this regard. We hope that improvements in relations between both countries will have positive and concrete effects on the security situation in the border areas and, consequently, on the humanitarian situation.

We reiterate once again that the obligation to protect civilians is primarily an obligation of States. Therefore Chad and the Sudan must do whatever is necessary to honour that obligation. The rebel groups must also implement their obligations in that regard.

My delegation would like to express, once again, our support for the recommendations of the Secretary-General contained in his most recent report on the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (S/2008/662). In this regard, the Security Council is considering convening an important debate on measures relative to the protection of civilians under imminent threat.

Finally, we hope that the next debate on the protection of civilians will offer us an opportunity to discuss this important issue.

Mr. Mantovani (Italy): I wish to thank Under-Secretary-General Holmes for his briefing and commend him on the extremely vital work he has carried out during his visit and to encourage the humanitarian community operating in such difficult circumstances, which the Council witnessed directly some months ago.

I also thank the Permanent Representative of Chad for his contribution to our discussion.

The briefing has conveyed the disturbing message that five years since the breakout of conflict in Darfur, the situation continues to be critical and we need to prepare ourselves for massive, long-term involvement.

The situation in Chad is also difficult because of banditry, as we just heard. The deployment of the European Union-led peacekeeping force and the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and

Chad has made an important contribution to improving security in the region as well as in the refugee and internally displaced persons camps. These results must be consolidated by maintaining an effective international presence. More promising is the situation in southern Sudan, where problems in the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement are reflected in people fleeing and security conditions.

The humanitarian crisis in the Sudan and Chad were produced by the conflict, and we share fully Under-Secretary-General Holmes' view that we need to reinvigorate the peace process for Darfur and that all parties need to comply with the monitored ceasefire. We also agree with Under-Secretary-General Holmes that access, protection, as well as the security of humanitarian workers, are of crucial importance.

We just heard that the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) has been able to make a difference in the Kalma camp. We hope that UNAMID can strengthen its presence in other camps as well. However, a solution to the current access and security problems lies not only in the full deployment of international forces, but also in greater efforts by Government authorities and full respect of international humanitarian law by all parties, including the rebel movement.

Italy is pleased to see progress in the cooperation between the Sudanese Government and UNAMID. In the humanitarian sector, we welcome the extension of the moratorium on fast-track procedures for humanitarian workers in Darfur, while calling for its full implementation.

I would like to add a few words on Italy's commitment to the stabilization process in the Sudan. In the framework of our pledge at the 2005 Oslo Donors' Conference, my Government has disbursed an average of €20 million Euros per year.

Before concluding, I would like to raise two more points. The long-term solution to the humanitarian problem depends on the return of 2.7 million people displaced by the fighting. Their return must be voluntary. How can we facilitate the conditions for their return? We are also concerned about land and property issues and an ensemble of issues important for the daily life of these people.

We also noticed a reference in the briefing to the significant impact on the environment of the current conflict, which in itself a consequence, at least in part, of scarcity of natural resources. Is there any room for greater attention to this dimension of the crisis by the humanitarian community?

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): Allow me also to thank Mr. Holmes for his briefing and to welcome our colleague, the Permanent Representative of Chad, to this meeting.

I think that other speakers have made it clear that we support the humanitarian workers, who are really the face of the United Nations on the ground, and we worry about their safety in that very difficult environment.

We wish to reiterate that the final solution will come about when we have both a political process in place on the ground and the security that is necessary. We are delighted by the normalization of relations between Chad and the Sudan and hope that this normalization will lead these two friendly countries to find a way to resolve the problems between them.

The President: I will now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Croatia.

Croatia joins other delegations in thanking Mr. Holmes for all the work he has done and for his briefing today about his most recent trip to Chad and the Sudan. I would also like to welcome the Ambassador of Chad and thank him for his statement.

It was only this morning that we were briefed on the Sudan from another angle, that is, its lack of cooperation with the International Criminal Court. Now, we have heard in graphic detail what the situation is in this country and about the ongoing suffering of the population, especially that of refugees and the internally displaced persons (IDPs), many of whom are women and children.

What we have heard is very disturbing and I echo other delegations who have expressed their serious concerns and indignation.

If anything, this briefing has assured us that the international community needs to invest more efforts into bringing a political solution to this conflict, and ending impunity for all war crimes will certainly help in this process.

As has been proven time and again, there is no lasting peace without justice, and any suggestion to the contrary is hollow and without merit. The humanitarian situation in neighbouring Chad is also affected by all of this. A large number of refugees and IDPs are living in precarious and often unsafe conditions and their human rights are not always protected.

We understand that the Government of Chad is under a great deal of pressure, but we believe that it should further increase its investment in creating a viable political dialogue that will bring an end to the conflict and restore the normality that is so needed in order to be able to address humanitarian and development issues. We are encouraged by Mr. Holmes' optimistic assessment of the situation in Chad over the past 12 months and we hope this trend will continue.

We hope that the recent rapprochement between Chad and the Sudan will also help bring positive change to the humanitarian situation.

Finally, my delegation would like to express its deep gratitude to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, under the leadership of Under-Secretary-General Holmes, as well as to all other humanitarian entities and workers, for their unwavering commitment to alleviate the suffering of affected civilians under very challenging conditions.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to Mr. Holmes to respond to comments and questions raised.

Mr. Holmes: I shall just to respond briefly to some of the points raised.

First, I am very grateful for the support that has been expressed around the table this afternoon for humanitarian efforts and for the heroism and courage of humanitarian workers, in both Darfur and Chad. I was also very grateful for support expressed in many quarters for what I was saying about issues such as access, the importance of the protection of civilians and efforts in that area, including the problems of gender-based violence, the importance of maintaining the civilian and humanitarian nature of refugee and IDP camps, the importance of speeding up administrative procedures and reducing administrative obstacles to humanitarian work, including implementation of the moratorium on restrictions,

which has just been extended, and the responsibility of Governments to facilitate humanitarian work and protect humanitarian workers, including not least, for example, stopping the phenomenon of banditry, which is common to both Darfur and eastern Chad. I also noted the primordial importance given by virtually all speakers to the need for a ceasefire that is respected by all sides and urgent efforts to produce a political settlement. I hope that the Governments concerned and the rebel movements also will listen to these messages coming from the Council.

Let me also take this opportunity to echo and agree with what was said by many people around the table about the importance of relations between Chad and the Sudan and the improvement that we have seen in recent weeks. I was able to discuss this in both capitals, and I did note that there was a certain cautious readiness on both sides to make a fresh start on the basis of the Dakar Agreement, which has started with the exchange of ambassadors and which was noted by many speakers. I hope it will be followed shortly by the deployment of the agreed border contingents on both sides of the long border between the two countries. As people have said, that is absolutely fundamental if there is to be any chance of a peaceful settlement in Darfur and stabilization of the region.

The representative of France raised the issue of the protection of the civilian and humanitarian nature of the camps but made the point that that does not excuse attacks against the camps. He referred to the particular case of the very tragic incident in August of this year in Kalma camp in south Darfur, when 33 IDPs were killed and many more injured. I simply wanted to echo that point. That issue was very fresh in the minds of the people in Kalma camp whom I met. I was also able to discuss it with the authorities in south Darfur and in Khartoum and to remind them that there was still a need for a proper investigation of that incident.

On the question of returns of IDPs in eastern Chad, the representative of France suggested that sometimes the United Nations might have been too slow in responding to that phenomenon and accompanying those who were returning. I wanted to assure him that we do recognize the importance of providing assistance to those who are returning and making sure that some basic services are in place. In the place I visited — which was also visited recently by Minister Kouchner — I think we are beginning to do that, both on the part of United Nations agencies

and non-governmental organizations. The only note of caution I would raise is that we need to be careful that we actually maintain the full processes of consultation and voluntariness on the part of the IDPs themselves and do not get ourselves into a position where we appear to be putting undue pressure on people to return before they genuinely think it is safe to do so.

The representative of the Russian Federation reminded us that humanitarian assistance is there to support Governments and needs to respect their sovereignty fully. I simply want to assure him that we fully recognize that ourselves. We also recognize, as many people around the table commented this afternoon, that the fundamental responsibility for the safety and security of their own citizens and also of humanitarian workers rests with the Governments concerned.

The representative of Costa Rica asked about the prospects for the people in the camps and the plans for their future. I think the representative of Italy made a similar comment about how we can encourage and facilitate returns. I think the first thing to say is that, obviously, we are fully in favour of people in camps, whether they are refugees or IDPs, returning to their places of origin as soon as they possibly can. As I said in my own remarks, life in camps is dehumanizing, demoralizing and damaging to any prospects of normality in the future, and becomes more so the longer it goes on. Therefore, we encourage returns as soon as possible. But the basic conditions for those returns have to be in place, the most basic condition being security. That is the issue that is raised constantly with me. Whenever I go into a camp and talk to people, they say "Of course we want to go home, but we can't go home until we feel safe when we do."

There is also the question of the provision of basic services like health and education and other parts of infrastructure when people return home, but the basic requirement is security. I think what that means is that it is difficult to imagine wholesale return of people from camps in either Chad or Darfur until there is a proper peaceful settlement. In the meantime, if there are people who wish to go home, and if there are areas that have become safe and are seen as safe by the inhabitants of the camps themselves, that is entirely welcome, and we will certainly help those concerned to return. We have no hesitation about that; we think it is a positive development.

I think another important part of this, which I did refer to briefly in my remarks, is the possibility of locally led reconciliation efforts between different communities, which have very often gone through very traumatic times in the past few years, whether in Chad or Darfur. If such reconciliation efforts can be maintained and pursued, if communities can reach agreement between themselves about living together peacefully in the future, that facilitates the question of return as soon as possible.

A related question was raised by the representative of Italy with regard to land and property rights. There is no doubt in my mind that, in the context of discussions about a settlement in Darfur, those issues are fundamental, as they are in many other circumstances. We need to make sure we have done all the homework necessary to try to resolve those issues so that when people do start to return home in large numbers, any conflict between them and other people who may have occupied their land or been using their land for grazing in the meantime can be resolved peacefully and that there are proper dispute-resolution mechanisms in place. These issues are absolutely fundamental in this context, and we need to have them fully in mind.

The representative of Costa Rica also mentioned the protection of civilians and the need to continue the debate on that. I entirely welcome the possibility of continuing that discussion — what it means, how important it is and how we can do things about those areas — within the context of the debate on the protection of civilians, which we will be having, I think, in January. I look forward to that very much.

Finally, the last point raised by the representative of Italy was a question about the environment, which I

did touch on briefly. I was shocked at some of the things I saw and heard while I was in Darfur this time, but also in eastern Chad. For example, in south Darfur, the site of Kalma camp used to be a forest. There are now virtually no trees visible in any direction around the camp, apart from those that are useless. In fact, the camp is littered with the trunks of trees that have been felled and are being used for various purposes. The environmental damage being done there, and in areas around other camps in south Darfur, is very considerable. Environmental experts I met raised the point that if we do not do something about this now, by the time the conflict is resolved the damage may have become irreversible.

I think this is a very important point we need to bear in mind: the damage to timber because of urbanization and the need for firewood and the damage to water resources caused by concentrations of IDPs in certain places. And not least, we have to bear in mind the large-scale presence of the international community. Peacekeeping forces and humanitarians also contribute to this. More buildings are needed and more water and timber are consumed, so we have a particular responsibility to start to tackle these environmental issues now, rather than waiting until the end of the conflict, at which stage it will be much more difficult to resolve them.

Thank you very much, Mr. President, for the opportunity to respond to those points.

The President: I thank Under-Secretary-General Holmes for the clarifications he has provided.

There are no more speakers on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.